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DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS

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BY
DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS

Author of "Laugh and Live," "Making Life Worth While."



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ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITIES

Those who fear to assume responsibility necessarily *take orders from others.* The punishment fits the crime perfectly and being self-inflicted there is no injustice. It is true that many men possessed of great brain power play "second fiddle" to shallow-minded men of inferior wisdom from sheer lack of forcefulness on their own part. They lack the full quality of leadership while possessing all save one essential—*courage.* Fear abides in their hearts and spreads itself as a mantle of gloom over their super-sensitive souls until finally they struggle no more. Henceforth they are doomed and become the subject of apology on the part of friends and relations. "He's all right," they say, "but he suffers from over-refinement.

He lacks something—we cannot make out just what. It is altogether too bad for he is such a superior man among *his social equals.*"

We must take our hats off to those who have the goodness of heart to make allowance for our shortcomings. A disinterested listener, however, is seldom taken into camp by such well intended argument. He knows that "friend husband" or "friend brother," as the case may be, needs some sort of swift kick that will stir his combativeness into action—that will cause him to turn upon his mental inferior and have it out with him then and there—once and for all. As a courage builder, *fighting for justice* is not to be sneezed at.

Courage can be built up just the same as any other soul quality. It is all a matter of early training as to which we start out with—courage or fear. Unthinking parents have a lot to do with the propagation of fear in the hearts of children. A *neglectful father* plus a *fear-stricken mother* constitute the most logical forces which tend

toward the overdevelopment of fear in a child. Once the seed is thoroughly implanted the growth can be depended upon. How to get rid of it later is not so easy to figure out. Had the child been born with a "club-foot" these same parents would have spent their last dollar in an effort to straighten it into natural condition. They could see the unshapely foot day by day with their own eyes—and so could their neighbors. But the fear-warped little brain struggling for courage with which to combat its weakness needs must battle alone with chances largely against it.

The mere thought of what is in store for this little one as it stumbles along from one period to another, fearful of this, and fearful of that, is disconcerting to say the least. We can almost trace our friend "Second Fiddle" directly back to such a childhood. We can almost hear his fond mother shout, "Keep away from the brook, darling, you might get your feet wet and *catch your death of a cold.*" Another well known and highly respected admonition belonging to child-

hood's hour is, "Come in, deary, it's getting dark—Bogie man will get you if you don't watch out."

Some years later when little son runs breathless into the home portal after being chased from school by some "turrible" boys we can hear this same little mother as she storms about the place and tells what "papa must do" about the matter. According to her notion, if teachers could not control the "criminal element" among their pupils then it was high time for the police to step in. Never a word about little son taking his own part! Father listens in silence and half formulates the notion of going direct to the parents and laying down the law, while little son listens in fear and trembling in anticipation of what is coming to him if father carries out his threat.

Tall oaks from little acorns grow—*if the twig is not bent in the sprouting.*

Little son is bound to grow into manhood some day and when he arrives he must have one particular attribute—*courage.* Somehow he will get along if he has that. He may

also wear a "clubfoot" or a "hunched back," but with courage as a running mate he will assume his responsibilities and become a force in the world.

Once a great orator sat upon a rostrum listening to a speech by a man who cautioned his countrymen against taking steps to defend the national honor. "We'll outlive the taunts of those who would drag us into war!" he bellowed forth. Whereupon the orator jumped to his feet and with clarion voice shouted, "God hates a coward!" and then sat down again.

Dazed at first the vast throng sat stupefied —but only for a moment. Then as one man they jumped to their feet and by reason of prolonged cheering gave national impulse to a thought which has since been sermonized from thousands of pulpits. The orator had simply paraphrased and put "pep" into the old Biblical slogan "The Lord helps those who help themselves." The effect was electrical. The whole country rallied to the idea with the result that we saved ourselves from war by showing the solid front of be-

ing ready and willing to defend ourselves.

Everything that tends to build up courage is an asset in life. The more we have of it the further we go and the more interesting our lives become. For *the man of the lion heart* all things unfold and unto him the timid must bring their offerings. No one of ordinary gumption consults the human "flivver." Advice from him would be unavailing. His point of view would be inadequate—his ability to advise, impotent. We go to the man who does things and say to him: "Here is my little idea—do you want to help me put it over?" If it is good, he does. If not, his experience tells him so, for men of courage are naturally possessed of large vision. Their lack of fear has given them right-of-way over vast areas of the world of action. They fail only as "their lights go out forever."

With courage we order our own lives and take orders only from those of superior wisdom. This we can never afford *not to do.* The courageous man of largest vision commands by his power to reason logically and

therefore assumes the air of comradeship rather than "overseer" or "boss." Only through lack of moral and physical courage are we to become the slaves of these.

Courage—the child of *Hope—the despair of Failure.* Born of Good Cheer it links its fate with the higher attributes and tramples under foot the fears which spring up before it. When *sown early* into the hearts of the young its companionship becomes unerring in its efficiency for good throughout their lives.

It is not our object to deal with a set course of physical culture, but rather to emphasize the necessity of keeping our physical house in order. There are plenty of books on physical culture which can be relied upon and also any number of physical instructors who are able to advise and help along a set program. There are hundreds of places, institutions, clubs, Y. M. C. A.'s, and the like, which provide gymnasiums and every other facility for those who determine to build themselves up

through consistent physical exercise. That is all very well to begin with, but afterward we must have some simple methods of our own which will not make it a hardship or a chore to keep ourselves in trim—*a state of physical preparedness.* It should become a part of our daily scheme to obey certain, simple rules which tend toward an *automatic effort* instead of a discipline, and we should persevere in these until they become *fixed habits.*

It is no trouble at all to take exercise unconsciously, and we only arrive at this by turning into an exercise any of our ordinary physical actions during the day as we go along. For instance, we can sit down in a chair and in so doing can add a certain amount of exercise to the action itself—also in rising. With very little effort we can come into the habit of sitting correctly—posing the body as it should be—holding the shoulders in proper position—also the chin so that it becomes a hardship to sit improperly.

All of this has to do with *general physique.*

In walking we can go along with a spring, elasticity, and vigor of motion which forces a fine blood circulation throughout the entire system. We can stoop over in the act of picking up some object from the floor and at the same time make it a matter of physical exercise, and we may take a hat from the rack while standing away from it, thus stretching ourselves, as it were, into a little needful action. Putting on an overcoat, or any part of our clothing, may be done in such a way as to set the blood to racing through the body. Morning and night—upon getting up and upon retiring—there is every reason to make it a rule to exercise freely.

The morning exercise wakes us up and sits us down finally at the breakfast table with a zest for the food set before us. The morning bath is an agency for good in this direction after we have given ourselves a good shake-up from head to foot. By the same token, exercises at night before retiring induce sound sleep and take away the strain of the preceding day.

A very successful system is that of exer-

cising in bed. Instead of immediately jumping to the floor in the morning it is very inviting to go through some simple form of gymnastics in which the physical structure is brought into play.

Physical exercise is something which can be carried to extremes. We can go at the work so intensely that we become muscle-bound and develop some structural enlargements that we do not need. This happens very often among athletes. The ordinary man should fight shy of such plans. Superfluous strength is only for those who have need of it. What we really want is strength enough to carry us through our daily rounds with comfort and *a feeling of efficiency.*

In a sense we all live by our wits and these decline when not properly fed by our general physical organization. Prize fighters are not the longest lived people, nor are the professional athletes. Their calling requires extra building up which would be a positive handicap to the average man whose manner of life doesn't require this super-development. In other words, there are intemperate

methods of exercising just as there are of eating and drinking. We may easily go too far. Again, we can sin just as greatly by not going far enough. There was a time when men of forty were as worn and old as men of sixty-five and seventy are today. As a matter of fact, nowadays a half-century mark is no longer a badge of senility when a man has kept himself fit and treated himself right.

We all have friends who are pretty well along in years by virtue of their carefully planned physical training, plus their *cheerful dispositions.* They are as sprightly and companionable as though they were many years younger. We should come to know early in life what a large part *good humor* plays in *physical fitness.* Hearty laughter is one of the very best of exercises. It is an organizer in itself and opens up the heart and lungs as nothing else will do. It makes the blood go galloping all through the system. It is one of the best automatic *blood circulators* in the business.

Laughter takes the stress off the mind,

and whatever is ahead of us for the day that seems likely to become a burden is soon turned into an ordinary circumstance. We smile as we go about doing it.

A friend once said to a banker:

"How do you know when to lend your money?"

The banker replied:

"I look a man in the eye and then *I do or I don't.*"

The friend said:

"I would like to borrow ten thousand dollars—now!"

"You shall have it, Sir," the banker replied.

This meant that the man who asked for the loan was in a state of physical and mental preparedness. If he had gone into the banker's office looking like an animated tombstone he wouldn't have had much of a chance to borrow the ten thousand. It goes without saying that the open-faced, hearty fellow inspires confidence. There is nothing coming to the dried-up, sour chap, and that's what he usually gets. And what we get is

largely a matter of our physical well being. A modern philosopher observed that "the blues are the product of bad livers"—and there is no doubt but that he was right.

The problem of life is to fill our days with sunshine. In so doing we shall find that the "little graces" are those which will lend us the most help. Tiny favors extended, words of encouragement, courtesies of all sorts, unselfish work carried out in an open manner, true friendships and love, a hearty laugh, a sincere appreciation of the other fellow's struggle to keep his head above water, the conscientious carrying out of all tasks assigned us—these are our helpmates and they are the products of our physical and mental equipment. Through these we come into our knack of detecting friends among those who are *the salt of the earth.*

It is impossible for the person who desires good health to obtain it, or having it, to retain it, without consistent effort. A watch will not run without the proper regulation of the mainspring. We must keep up our activities. We have taken the earth and are

turning it into something to serve us—therefore the need of fine bodily preparedness. Nothing can take the place of achievement and it comes through physical and mental efficiency. The one must not be neglected for the other; both must be cultivated and developed alike in order that each may help the other.

Happiness comes only to those who take care of themselves. It is the natural product of *clean-mindedness*. No pleasure can surpass that of a conscious feeling of our strength of character. It is an all important element in men who aspire to succeed. The man who rises in the morning from a healthy slumber and plunges into the bath after some vigorous exercise is prepared to undertake anything. His world seems fair, and though the sun may not be shining literally, it is to all intents and purposes. Thus, we go swinging along with a cheery smile, carrying the message of hope and joy to all those with whom we come in contact. Oh! it's fine to be physically and mentally fit!

The character of a man expresses itself by the books he reads. Every well-informed man since the invention of printing has been a close reader of a few books that stand out from among the many. We read of Lincoln devouring the few books he had over and over again and studying from cover to cover and word for word the Webster's dictionary of his day. We know that Grant had his favorite volumes from which he drew inspiration and solace. These men made eternal friends of certain great thinkers and drank in their learning with all the fervor of their natures.

"A few good books, digested well, do feed
The mind."

"Feed the mind!" That's the idea—*but how shall we feed it?* The answer is easy—with something *worth while*—something that will inform and inspire. We can cram our minds to the point of indigestion with useless, frivolous information just as easily as we may cram our stomachs with certain

foods that tear down rather than build up. The habit of reading the right sort of books should begin early in life and continue throughout our days.

Good books are real . . . and as we read we feel, hear, see and understand in the way the author did. If what is said appeals to our way of thinking *a new world* is unfolded to our vision filled to the brim with things we can think about and add to our stock of knowledge. While we are buried in its leaves we may live over the thoughts that the writer lived. For the time being he becomes as real and vital to us as the dearest friend we possess. Gradually, as the time passes by, he creeps into our affections until our lives would not be complete without the comradeship of this cherished book.

Books that become our "pals" are not necessarily books of the so-called classical type. Little-known volumes may prove to have enough thought stored away between their covers to keep us interested all our days. The great books will prove their worth in a short time no matter how poor the binding,

how bad the type or how cheap the paper. These things are after all only the outward manifestations and though we like to see our friends dressed well yet we know that the clothes do not make character unless there is character there in the first place. And so it is with books. These little ungainly volumes which we purchase on the stands may be the classics of tomorrow . . . who knows?

We select our library carefully. No matter if we live in a tiny hall bedroom on the top floor of a boarding house we have a shelf somewhere with a few good books on it. Emerson's "Essays" can be had in one volume and are well worth having. No other American writer has been so inspiring, so invigorating as this thinker of Concord. One cannot read his essays without having a desire to *get up and do*. It is like a breath of fresh air . . . a tonic . . . a stiff morning walk. It stirs the mind to action and inspires us to lift ourselves out of the rut into which we have fallen. One returns to them time after time, each reading opening

up new vistas of thought, new lines of mental development.

As a man's stomach is what he eats, a man's mind is what he reads. It goes without saying that no healthy, active mind could exist without the companionship of Shakespeare. Nowadays it is possible to secure the entire works of the immortal poet in one volume. There is a special Oxford University edition which can be had for a small sum. The type is large, the paper good and there are many notes to help one over the rocky places. There is no doubt of the truth of the saying that a man who reads Shakespeare consistently and with understanding needs no other education. Like the philosopher Emerson he boiled down the world's thoughts into terse sentences and one goes into a new universe when reading any of the plays. It is a good thing to learn parts of them by heart so that we can apply them to our own lives. They strengthen the mind . . . their beauty lifts us into a great realism of splendid thought . . . and they fill the heart with a longing to do something

great. Such books should become steady companions through life. No matter where our duties call us we should see to it that we do not leave behind the thoughts of this master mind of Shakespeare. The very fact that we have them near us lifts us out of the monotony of nothing to do.

Among the books about America for Americans perhaps Roosevelt's "Winning of the West" is among the best. Not only has he thrown the whole vigor of his interesting personality into the writing of it, but he has given us a vivid picture of the conquest of the States by the settlers. No man could read it without being thrilled at the dangers our forefathers faced . . . at the great courage they possessed . . . at their hardihood . . . their bulldog tenacity. The reading of such a book is like going back over the years and living with them, sharing their troubles and their enthusiasms. The man who contemplates gathering a small library could not afford to do without the inspiration of what his countrymen have done for him.

In choosing our books we must bear in mind one thing—*let them be inspiring.* Let them be of such a nature that when we read them we will feel like going out into the world to accomplish something *big!*

That is probably the mission of great books—to inspire and uplift. The world's greatest men have been readers—would they have cared for books unless they were inspiring? It is said that when Napoleon was being taken to St. Helena he advised one of the officers never to stop reading.

Most of the things worth while are at some time or other stored away in books by the thinkers. Every phase of history, every movement to better mankind and lift it above the drudgery of mere toil, every beautiful thought is to be found in them, and the better the book the more will be found in it of these very things. When we have finished the day's work we can pull down a volume from the shelf and in a moment be lost in an entirely different world. The man who neglects to read surely misses the one best means of broadening his mind.

All books of the better class furnish food for thought and are excellent tools for the man of initiative. To read means keeping in touch with the big visions. We cherish these dreams and make them real in plans of our own. Aspiration is behind the pages of every worth-while volume. It was the motive power which drove the author to produce it and it should become a part of the forces which drive us on to victory. Without such inspiration we grope as children in the dark. We are without a light to guide us on our way.

Books by such men as Marden and Hubbard are great generators of the electricity of doing things. They have put into words those innermost emotions which are the instruments of success. They point out a way we may safely follow. They loan us inspiration which causes us to act for ourselves. They give us thoughts that are useful and practical which we never would have gained by virtue of our own reasoning power. They made it a life work to coin into phrases words that inspire. Out of their large ex-

perience came the logical sequences of cause and effect. Not to profit by their teachings is a crime against our own prospects—without them we lag behind. Instead of progressing we look on in wonder at what is going on in the world. Somehow we cannot connect ourselves with the big enterprises. And all because we failed to feed our minds properly.

There is much to be gained both in pleasure and knowledge by reading historical novels and the lives of great men. The books of Sir Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper are rated among the best in the world. Grant's autobiography and the personal stories of other famous Americans provide fascinating material with which to establish and fortify our test for good literature. The tales of modern American financiers is another field of absorbing interest.

The man with small means can provide himself with a working library for very little money. Books are cheap. The public library is always nearby and there is hardly a town of any size but has one. When we

purchase a book we should be sure to obtain the best edition and be careful that it is printed from good type and on clear paper. Books are likely to become warm friends. We should never purchase an abridged edition.

Binding is not such an important factor, although we like to have *our favorite books* put up in handsome fashion. With Shakespeare, Emerson, Roosevelt, Scott, Cooper, Marden and Hubbard one would have quite a representative collection for a start. It would be easy to expand the list into many more. Of course, those collecting a small library who have a specialty will want books dealing with the subjects in which they are interested. However, every practical library includes books of inspirational character, and if one makes a study of the books written by great authors it will be found that all of them profited by the reading of books which caused them to think. *The Bible causes us to think!—and no library is complete without it.*